

# Cyprus

By Tom Kirvan

## THE ISLAND OF APHRODITE AND ANCIENT WONDERS

Set in the azure waters of the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus is a sun-drenched island where myth and history intertwine, and every olive tree, beach cove, and ancient ruin tells a story. With a population of around 1.2 million people, Cyprus is the third-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and one of its most diverse, both culturally and geographically.

Cyprus is strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, just south of Turkey, and west of Syria and Lebanon. This position has made it a cultural melting pot over thousands of years. The island is roughly 149 miles long and 62 miles wide, ringed by stunning coastlines and crowned by the Troodos Mountains in the interior.

The capital city, Nicosia, is located in the heart of the island. Unique among world capitals, Nicosia is divided between the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (recognized only by Turkey) in the north. Despite the division, Nicosia offers a vibrant mix of old and new. Venetian walls encircle its Old Town, while cosmopolitan cafes, museums, and boutiques bring a modern flair. Strolling across the Ledra Street pedestrian crossing allows visitors to experience both sides of this intriguing city.

Dominating the Troodos range is Mount Olympus, the island's highest point at 6,404 feet above sea level. In winter, it's capped with snow and home to a small ski resort – an unusual sight in the Mediterranean. In summer, it becomes a haven for hikers, offering cool pine forests, Byzantine monasteries, and breathtaking panoramic views.

Cyprus boasts a history spanning 10,000 years, making it one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on Earth. It has been ruled by Mycenaean Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Venetians, Ottomans, and British, with each leaving behind layers of cultural and architectural heritage.

The island gained independence from British rule in 1960, but tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots escalated, leading to the division of the island in 1974. Today, Cyprus remains partitioned, though peaceful, with efforts ongoing to reunify the island.



## Fast Facts

Capital: Nicosia  
Population: 1.2 million  
Languages: Greek and Turkish  
Religions: Christianity and Islam

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AMG Mylonas & Associates, LLC, a full-service law firm based in Limassol.



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## Five Must-See Destinations

- **Paphos Archaeological Park:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Paphos on the southwest coast is a must-visit for history lovers. The Archaeological Park includes impressive Roman villas with intricate mosaic floors, the Tombs of the Kings, ancient theaters, and ruins that span millennia. According to legend, Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, was born from the sea near Paphos, and the town's romantic aura lingers still.
- **Kyrenia (Girne):** Located on the northern coast, Kyrenia is known for its picturesque harbor and medieval Kyrenia Castle, which offers panoramic sea views and a fascinating shipwreck museum. The town is filled with charming restaurants, narrow lanes, and a relaxed atmosphere that's perfect for soaking up the Mediterranean vibe. The nearby Bellapais Abbey, nestled in the hills, offers both stunning architecture and views.
- **Troodos Mountains and Painted Churches:** Beyond Mount Olympus, the Troodos Mountains are a lush, pine-covered escape from the coastal heat. Scattered through its valleys and villages are UNESCO-listed Byzantine churches, famous for their vivid frescoes and traditional stone architecture. The villages of Omodos, Kakopetria, and Pedoulas offer local wine, crafts, and authentic hospitality.
- **Larnaca and the Church of Saint Lazarus:** A tranquil seaside city, Larnaca offers a beautiful blend of history and beach life. The Church of Saint Lazarus, built in the 9th century, is one of the most important Orthodox sites on the island. Nearby, visitors can walk along the Finikoudes Promenade, visit the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque by the salt lake (where flamingos gather in winter), or enjoy a beachside meal of freshly grilled halloumi and seafood.
- **Cape Greco and Ayia Napa:** On the island's southeastern tip lies Cape Greco National Forest Park, a natural paradise of sea cliffs, caves, and crystal-clear waters. It's perfect for hiking, cliff diving, or simply admiring the wild beauty of Cyprus' coastline. Nearby, Ayia Napa offers nightlife, famous beaches (like Nissi Beach), and water sports galore, making it a favorite among younger travelers and families alike.